

REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 7-22 currently appear in this application. The Office Action of April 1, 2004, has been carefully studied. These claims define novel and unobvious subject matter under Sections 102 and 103 of 35 U.S.C., and therefore should be allowed. Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration, entry of the present amendment, and formal allowance of the claims.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112

Claims 1-4 and 6-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Examiner alleges that the claims contain subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the art that the inventor, at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. The Examiner objects to the language of "at least one central layer."

This rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 1 has been amended to recite that there is an optional layer containing a superabsorbent material. Support for this amendment can be found in the specification at page 18, paragraph 0057.

Art Rejections

Claims 1-4 and 7-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of Bair, either LeVan or Frankosky et al., Kennette et al. and further in view of Bryson.

This rejection is respectfully traversed. As the Examiner has noted, cellulose fibers are somewhat brittle, and the carding action used to produce nonwoven webs tends to break some fibers and results in the undesirable presence of short fiber lint or dust. However, it should be appreciated that a carded product having long fibers has a surface which makes it impossible to apply a latex layer on the surface seeing that the latex will be absorbed into the product due to the coarse structure existing in the carded fiber. The fiber would have a lower density and, accordingly, more spaces would occur between the fibers, in which spaces the latex will enter the interior of the web. The prior art teaches that dust should be removed before preparing the final product, so that there would be no dusting problems with the final product. Moreover, cotton fibers should be cleaned before they enter into a carding process, and the carding process itself assists in removing dust.

The present inventor has solved the problem of short fibers in making webs, particularly air-laid fibrous webs.

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When the binder is applied in a foamed condition, it covers the surface of the web with a minimum of dry matter so that the surface fibers are bonded, and so these short fibers remain in place and partially assist in sealing against extrusion of the short and unbonded fibers from the inside of the web material.

All of the cited patents mention that it is common to remove dust from the material to be used to form a web, rather than maintaining the dust or small fibers in the product and then insulating these dust particles within the product, as occurs with the present invention.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the claims are now in condition for allowance, and favorable action thereon is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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